

Moriah Shock seen as benefit to town and state

By **LOHR McKINSTRY**

Staff Writer

February 01, 2010 03:28 am

MORIAH — Supporters say the Moriah Shock Incarceration Correctional Facility doesn't just boost the local economy and turn out rehabilitated drug-offenders — it saves the state millions of dollars annually.

In a report released in the 1990s, the National Institute of Justice, a division of the U.S. Department of Justice, estimated the state saved about \$2 million in care and custody costs for every 100 shock-incarceration graduates, which is about \$20,000 per inmate.

And more recent reports from the New York State Department of Corrections corroborate that.

SHOULD EXPAND

Gov. David Paterson put the closure of Moriah Shock and other facilities in his recent budget proposal, saying it would save the state money.

But Moriah Town Supervisor Thomas Scozzafava said the governor should look carefully at the figures for shock camps.

"The Shock Program actually saves the state of New York a tremendous amount of money. They should look at that program, expand the length of stay, increase the population by allowing older inmates, offer some vocational training."

For the first 8,842 graduates from shock camps, the State Department of Correctional Services estimated it saved \$176.2 million in care and custody costs.

The savings took into account costs associated with 5,331 shock-incarceration inmates who did not graduate. About 30 percent of those admitted to shock programs drop out.

Savings from shock incarceration were calculated by subtracting the cost of housing inmates if the program did not exist.

FEWER RETURN

The state report also tracked recidivism of graduates from shock facilities.

"After 12 months, 10 percent of shock-incarceration graduates returned to prison compared to 16 percent for offenders eligible before shock incarceration was established."

After 24 months, 30 percent of the shock-incarceration graduates returned to prison, compared to 36 percent of the pre-shock-incarceration inmates, the report concluded.

"Analysis performed by researchers indicates that at 12 and 24 months, the shock-incarceration graduates have significantly lower return-to-prison rates than other offenders."

LOW RISK

The National Institute of Justice report concluded "evaluation so far indicates that the program is responding to the legislature's call for reducing prison bed-space needs without increasing the public's risk.

"Even more important, New York's therapeutic approach may point the way for redirecting the lives of a number of young offenders, helping them stay out of the criminal-justice system once they have paid their debt to the community."

BILLION IN SAVINGS

The Department of Correctional Services 2007 legislative report — the latest available — said the 35,000 inmates who took shock training up to September 2006 saved the state \$1.1 billion in prison operating and capital costs. Shock graduates were released from parole 11 months earlier than normal, also saving supervision costs.

At shock camps, inmates are divided into drill companies. They sing in cadence as they march like military recruits.

It is that military-style discipline that has been lauded for rehabilitating the inmates who pass through the Shock Program.

CREWS ADD TO SAVINGS

David Abair of Moriah is a correction officer/drill instructor at Moriah Shock.

"The shock legislative report explains how shock saves \$3 million for every 100 inmates that we graduate, and we graduate more than 300 per year," he said.

"The (\$20,000 per inmate) mentioned is money saved for just early release of inmates. The average is that shock inmates go home about one year earlier. This is a savings of \$9 million per year."

He said the figures don't include the savings to local community budgets from the work performed by 11 Moriah Shock community work crews each day. Many local elected officials have said their communities could not afford to do most of the work performed by Moriah Shock crews.

"We also logged 61,000 inmate work crew hours last year," Abair said. "That equates to \$442,250 at minimum wage (of) \$7.25. This is money that would have to be passed on to the taxpayers if we lose Moriah.

"Warehousing inmates in prison does not work. Moriah Shock works and saves the state more money staying open than they gain closing this facility.

"I don't know what kind of money amount anyone could put on the loss to economy for that area, but it would be devastating."

E-mail Lohr McKinstry at: lmckinstry@pressrepublican.com

Copyright © 1999-2010 cnhi, inc.